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BD/PEPFAR Lab-Strengthening Initiative Marks Progress in Fight Against HIV/AIDS and TB in Sub-Saharan Africa

TRAINING PROGRAMS IN UGANDA, SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE IMPROVE LABORATORY PRACTICES, SAFETY AND PATIENT CARE

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, July 19 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- A collaboration between the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company) has made significant progress in improving lab conditions and enhancing the skills of lab personnel on the front lines of the battle against HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) in sub-Saharan Africa.

The PEPFAR-BD collaboration -- valued at up to \$18 million -- targets a number of countries seriously impacted by HIV/AIDS. Under PEPFAR, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through CDC, is the lead implementing agency for strengthening laboratory systems. BD is a leading global medical technology company with technical expertise relating to laboratory systems.

Through a series of training programs conducted to date in Uganda, South Africa and Mozambique, the ambitious lab-strengthening program is part of a five-year initiative designed to fortify healthcare systems in countries severely impacted by the two pandemics.

"The shortage of trained healthcare workers is one of the largest constraints to battling disease in developing countries," said Krista Thompson, Vice President and General Manager, Global Health at BD. "BD and PEPFAR are helping to improve the fundamental capacity to deliver healthcare by training workers in sub-Saharan Africa. Proper training helps lead to proper diagnosis, which is essential for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, TB and other diseases."

"Efforts to build country health systems are essential as we transition toward greater sustainability of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care efforts and broader public health initiatives," said Ambassador Eric Goosby, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. "We must support country-led efforts to plan and manage programs, deliver services and ultimately finance critical health programs. PEPFAR's collaboration with BD is supporting the development of this essential country capacity by strengthening health systems in the areas of human resources and laboratory services."

Under a lab management training program in Uganda, a total of 94 healthcare workers have participated in a series of training sessions where they received instruction on a broad range of topics relating to quality management in laboratory settings. This program was developed and implemented in collaboration with Infectious Diseases Institute, Supply Chain Management System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Uganda Ministry of Health.

Over the course of the training period, overall lab worker test scores increased from an average of 35 percent prior to training to 88 percent, representing a 151 percent improvement.

In addition, Uganda's National TB Reference Laboratory is working with BD and CDC-Uganda to use Global Positioning System/Global Information System (GPS/GIS) technology to ensure that TB specimens -- often collected in remote areas -- arrive promptly at reference labs for processing. The technology maps multiple laboratory sites with the goal of developing a transportation network, while monitoring specific improvements within targeted laboratories. To date, more than 200 samples have been referred through this innovative specimen management initiative.

In South Africa, 22 microbiologists -- representing healthcare systems in Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa -- participated in ten-day courses to improve their ability to detect and identify mycobacterium TB. The training was conducted by CDC, BD, and other training partners. The course, entitled "TB Culture and Identification," was held at the African Centre for Integrated Lab Training in Johannesburg.

As part of the curriculum, the microbiologists were introduced to liquid culture testing systems that identify drug-resistant forms of TB faster and more accurately than traditional methods.

In Mozambique, BD has worked with CDC-Mozambique and the American Society for Clinical Pathology to provide phlebotomy training for healthcare workers. Additionally, to help improve the quality of lab diagnostics, BD worked closely with the Mozambique Ministry of Health and CDC-Mozambique to deliver training in quality management and in the assessment of laboratory capabilities.

In Uganda, South Africa and Mozambique, BD is working on the ground with Ministries of Health, National Reference Laboratories and various implementing partners to expand high-quality laboratory services.

Scientists and lab technicians participating in the training programs serve a total of eight sub-Saharan nations representing an overall population of 336 million people. The countries' national TB prevalence rates range from 426 to 692 infections per 100,000 people, while national HIV/AIDS rates range from 2.1 to 23.9 percent.

BD and PEPFAR announced their progress report at the 5th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention held July 19-22 in Cape Town, South Africa.

The first of its kind, public-private PEPFAR-BD collaboration was launched through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the two parties on October 31, 2007. The five-year initiative's programmatic elements include:

- Supporting country-specific programs working on the ground to develop overarching integrated laboratory systems, services, and quality improvement strategies
- Improving the quality of laboratory diagnostics critical to the management of HIV/AIDS patients through training health personnel
- Implementing quality-control and quality-assurance guidelines and supervisory tools for hematology, chemistry, CD4 testing and rapid HIV testing
- Strengthening TB reference sites to serve as centralized training

facilities

-- Improving access to TB diagnostics for HIV-positive patients

About PEPFAR

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was launched in 2003 to combat global HIV/AIDS, and is the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in history. Working in partnership with host nations, over ten years PEPFAR plans to support treatment for at least 3 million people, prevention of 12 million new infections, and care for 12 million people, including 5 million orphans and vulnerable children. For more information, please visit www.PEPFAR.gov.

About BD

BD is a leading global medical technology company that develops, manufactures and sells medical devices, instrument systems and reagents. The Company is dedicated to improving people's health throughout the world. BD is focused on improving drug delivery, enhancing the quality and speed of diagnosing infectious diseases and cancers, and advancing research, discovery and production of new drugs and vaccines. BD's capabilities are instrumental in combating many of the world's most pressing diseases. Founded in 1897 and headquartered in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, BD employs approximately 28,000 people in approximately 50 countries throughout the world. The Company serves healthcare institutions, life science researchers, clinical laboratories, the pharmaceutical industry and the general public. For more information, please visit www.bd.com.

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